

RECORDS AND FORMS MANAGEMENT 5.0

Vital Records -- 5.5

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Revised:

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cathy R. Taylor, DrPH, MSN, RN". The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

By: Cathy R. Taylor, DrPH, MSN, RN
Assistant Commissioner
Bureau of Health Services

POLICY

Copies of vital records located in Local Health Departments and Regional Offices may only be issued to applicants "showing a direct and tangible interest in the vital record". Selected information from a vital record may be provided (or verified) to the public upon specific request.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to Local Health Department and Regional Office personnel.

PURPOSE

To insure confidentiality of certain information from vital records while allowing the public to obtain other information.

PROCEDURE

All copies of birth and death records and related reports in Local Health Departments must be maintained in a secure location so the confidentiality of information is ensured. Copies should never be removed from the premises of the Local Health Department.

It is the responsibility of health department personnel to screen requests for copies of vital records to ensure that records are released to only persons who are legally entitled to certified copies.

Certified copies of birth or death certificates may be issued only to the registrant, his or her spouse, children, parents, or guardian, or their authorized representative, or another person who demonstrates the record is needed to determine or protect his or her personal or property right.

A certified copy or other copy of a death certificate should not be issued containing the cause of death unless (a) specifically requested by the spouse, children, parents, or other next of kin of the decedent or their respective authorized representative, (b) a documented need for the cause of death to establish a legal right or claim has been demonstrated, (c) the request for the copy is made by or on behalf of an organization which provides benefits to the survivors or beneficiaries, (d) specifically requested by local, state or federal agencies for research or administrative purposes approved by the State Registrar, (e) needed for research activities approved by the State Registrar, or (f) upon court order.

Vital records are public records and information from a record may be provided and verified upon request, except that (a) information from the "Information for Medical and Health Use Only" section of the birth certificate may not be provided except by the State Registrar for statistical or research purposes and (b) information concerning cause of death may not be provided except to persons or for purposes as noted in the previous paragraph. Verified information may be provided when the applicant provides sufficient information to locate the record in question. The forms which **may be used** to provide verified information are **Application for Verification of Birth Facts, PH-3061**, and **Application for Verification of Facts of Death, PH-3055**. These forms, however, are not required and the verified information may be provided in other written form or verbally. Birth facts should be verified only by the State Registrar or the Local Registrar in Davidson, Hamilton, Knox or Shelby counties.

To maintain the physical security of the documents, the records in the custody of the health department are not available for hands-on public inspection.

If there is concern or doubt concerning whether the requestor is eligible to obtain a certified copy of a record or to obtain certain information from a record, the health department personnel should refer the requestor to the State Office of Vital Records.

Vital records and the information contained therein may be used by local health department staff for local health planning and program activities.

A **Records Disposition Authorization, GS-0524**, is required before any official record is destroyed. Unofficial copies can be destroyed without a Records Disposition Authorization (RDA). Information related to the type of record or copy that can be destroyed, the retention period (when applicable), and the RDA number for vital records and related reports can be found in the Vital Records Manual.

When it is necessary to dispose of the records, the documents must be destroyed by shredding (including shredding by hand) or burning. At the time of disposal, the

employee who is in charge of the destruction should complete a **Certificate of Records Destruction, GS-0989**. This form should be sent to the records manager in the Regional Health Office. It is the responsibility of the records manager to forward the completed form to the Records Officer of the Department of Health.

As a result of adoptions, legitimations or paternity orders, birth certificates must be placed in sealed files. For these situations the State Registrar will request a county to send all copies of a particular record to the State Office of Vital Records. Because of the legal status of the records being requested, these copies should be forwarded to the State Registrar as promptly as possible.

NECESSARY FORMS

1. Records Disposition Authorization, GS-0524
2. Certificate of Records Destruction, GS-0989
3. Application for Verification of Birth Facts, PH-3061
4. Application for Verification of Facts of Death, PH-3055

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

1. Vital Records Manual
2. T.C.A. 10-7-509
3. T.C.A. 68-3-104(b)(6)
4. T.C.A. 68-3-205
5. T.C.A. 68-3-206
6. T.C.A. 68-3-313(b)
7. Rules of the Department of Health, Chapter 1200-7-1-.04(7),.11,.12

OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY

State Registrar of Vital Records, Department of Health, (615)741-1763